



STABILITY PACT

FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

TASK FORCE ON TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

CONCLUSIONS

of the

6th Meeting of the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings

**Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro
23-24 March 2004**

Over two hundred participants from South Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and from as far away as the United States and Israel met on the 23rd and 24th of March 2004 in Belgrade at the 6th Meeting of the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings (SPTF). The aim of the meeting was to bring together representatives and experts to develop and coordinate anti-trafficking efforts in the region. It gathered the main actors central to the fight against human trafficking, both from countries of the region and from donor countries as well as representatives of international organizations, local and international NGOs and law enforcement authorities to provide a forum for discussion and information exchange with a view to initiating, streamlining and coordinating future activities.

The Meeting opened with an evening session on 23 March dedicated to introducing the issue of trafficking for forced and bonded labour. While this form of human trafficking often gets less attention than sex trafficking, countries need to be aware of its existence and ready to respond appropriately as required by the Palermo Protocol and other international instruments and standards. A detailed presentation of this subject was presented by Mr Roger Plant, Head of the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour of the International Labour Organization. Ms Beate Andrees, ILO, also presented first findings into the phenomenon in SEE. Mr Roy Wagner from the Israeli NGO Kav LaOved provided an illuminating presentation of this problem in Israel and a description and assessment of how mechanisms can cause people to get trapped and how they ought to work in order to counteract it. The links involving trafficking for forced and bonded labour originating in SEE and destined for Israel were established.

The exhibition 'Preventing Child Trafficking – Children's Opinions on the Dangers from Human Trafficking and Ways of Protection', organized by Save the Children UK, Belgrade Office, in cooperation with the Serbian NGO Roma Information Centre provided the framework for the evening reception

At the Opening Session the next morning, the large audience of participants were welcomed by statements of the Serbian Minister of the Interior Mr Dragan Jočić, by Mr Mark Davison, Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro, by Ambassador Mette Kongshem, Co-Chair of the OSCE Informal Working Group on Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking, by Ambassador Janez Premoze, Chair of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Working Table III, and the Special Representative of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Ambassador Andreas Nothelle.

In her introductory remarks, Ms Helga Konrad, Chair of the Stability Pact Task Force, indicated that the meeting would give special attention to the issue of trafficking in children and minors. This attention is especially timely because traffickers increasingly are targeting younger and younger victims and governments and nongovernmental organizations must strengthen and adapt their specific responses to this trend to be effective. Thousands of children and minors are targeted by organized crime for trafficking into sexual exploitation or such activities as begging, stealing and other criminal activities such as the market of pornography. NGOs working in this field have estimated that up to 30 percent of the trafficking victims in the region are children. Tragically, it is believed that these numbers may increase as traffickers seek to provide increasingly younger girls for sexual exploitation, especially those marketed or sold as virgins, in connection with the fear of HIV/AIDS.

Current responses to child trafficking are not adequate. It requires specialized responses. Treating trafficked children in exactly the same way as adults are treated is inappropriate. For example, countries must prepare responses for situations when it may be detrimental or dangerous to reunite the child with his or her family because the family sold the child to traffickers or was complicit in the trafficking to begin with. Government officials, law enforcement and non-governmental service providers need to review their responses to human trafficking to see how to best adapt those responses to the needs of children and minors. For that reason the SPTF had called upon the countries of the region to develop comprehensive National Plans of Action against child trafficking and to implement them as rapidly as possible.

Beginning at last year's Task Force Meeting in Portorož, Slovenia, the SPTF began laying the foundation for work on this aspect of human trafficking across the region. Within its role as a catalyst for meaningful anti-trafficking measures in South Eastern Europe and beyond, the SPTF supported the setting up of multidisciplinary subgroups to the national working groups in each of the countries in order to address trafficking in children and minors effectively.

The meeting was a valuable logical next step combining country presentations and discussion on current responses to child trafficking and included:

- Country presentations on the status of development of National Plans of Action against Trafficking in Children and Minors.
- Dialogue about the special steps that are needed to adapt responses for those girls and boys who were trafficked when they were under 18 years old.

- Updates of progress of a number of specific initiatives have been undertaken by SPTF implementing partners UNICEF, ILO/IPEC, IOM, Save the Children, also in close cooperation with Terre des Hommes and other International Organizations and NGOs.

In welcoming the honoured guests and participants and expressing her thanks to the host Government of Serbia and Montenegro and underlining the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro's leading role in hosting and co-organizing the 6th SPTF meeting, Ms Konrad indicated that progress is evident and that more countries of the region now have a solid foundation for proceeding together against this horrible organized crime and human rights violation of human trafficking including as it relates to children and minors.

The broad set of actions reported is the concrete follow-up to commitments made at the most recent Ministerial Forum in December 2003 in Sofia, where Ministers of Justice and Interior of South Eastern Europe committed their governments by signing the *Sofia Declaration* to establish comprehensive action plans on combating child trafficking, to develop specific child trafficking strategies and activities and to implement them:

- Develop and adopt minimum standards for the treatment of child victims of trafficking based upon the guidelines developed by UNICEF in accordance with other international and non-governmental organizations;
- Systematically collect data on child trafficking;
- Take all necessary measures to establish effective procedures for the rapid identification of child trafficking victims; and
- Adapt special referral procedures to assist and protect trafficked children involving all relevant institutions, agencies and authorities.

The presentations of both ECPAT Netherlands by Ms Anke van den Borne and Mr Theo Noten (*Joint East West Research on Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes in Europe: The Sending Countries*) and UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence by Mr Andrea Rossi provided highly valuable input on the subject of child trafficking and brought out the dimension of the problem in clear relief.

The 6th SPTF meeting also reviewed the progress on other parts of the SPTF's Comprehensive Anti-Trafficking Framework in the region. For example, updates on the countries' legal provisions regarding temporary residence permits for victims of human trafficking and the status of implementation (progress/problems/gaps) and on their responsibilities to provide for the safety of trafficking victims, especially those who agree to act as witnesses against the traffickers.

Ms Konrad indicated appreciation to donor countries for their involvement and their welcomed contributions. She urged them, however, to recognize that several years of work has been done on the issue in the region already and to ensure that contributions are better used to build upon the good work that has been done already in the past several years rather than to start all over again to reinvent the wheel.

She also described the range of “next steps” for this year as part of its comprehensive operational framework. These include:

- Introducing and further exploring within the region the labour dimensions of human trafficking (trafficking for forced and bonded labour and services). Awareness raising on the issue and support the development of appropriate responses to it;
- Enforcement of the established national and regional anti-trafficking structures (multidisciplinary working groups, implementation of national plans of action including for combating child trafficking, strengthen national anti-trafficking governmental coordinators etc.);
- Establishment of 'Twinning Programs' between so-called donor and recipient countries on curbing child trafficking;
- Mainstreaming of the trainings for police, the judiciary and the prosecutors on human trafficking;
- Develop special sections on child trafficking for inclusion into our existing training curricula;
- Implementation of temporary residence for victims of trafficking in SEE countries;
- Establishment of 3rd Country Resettlement Agreements for victim/witnesses of human trafficking from SEE countries;
- Support the setting up of a Regional Association of NGOs dealing with human trafficking;
- Promoting the rapid implementation of victim/witness protection programs;
- Forming a new initiative to train and provide private lawyers to victims of trafficking. SPTF has been in early development discussions on this with the American Bar Association (ABA-CEELI) and ICMPD;
- Crafting with NATO the development of its anti-trafficking policy; and
- The SPTF Media Program.

Ms Konrad indicated that the SPTF would continue to support, streamline and monitor the implementation of the regional projects carried out within the framework of the SPTF in order to ensure the achievement of meaningful results and the exposure of inadequate national and regional responses to this horrible crime and human rights violation.

Ms Konrad stressed that much more needs to be done. ‘It needs to be done better and it needs to be done with more urgency. Despite progress, the severe violence, the beatings, rape and torture against citizens of this region which occur on a daily basis in this region, in neighbouring countries and in far-reaching destination countries that is the staple of the traffickers continues largely unabated. This is why we meet again today and why we will continue to act until we have pushed back effectively against this scandal in our midst’.

With over two hundred people participating, this meeting demonstrated the breadth of interest, commitment, energy and experience that now exists across the SEE region and beyond to address human trafficking more effectively. It is a clear indicator of how far things have come in a few short years.

